



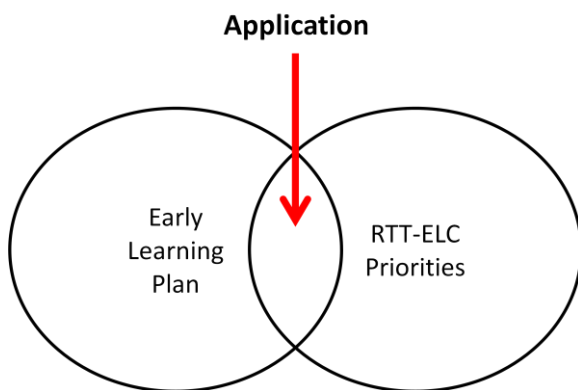
STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING
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July 20, 2011

Dear Early Learning Leaders,

Since receiving the [Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge \(RTT-ELC\) preliminary guidelines](#) a few weeks ago, we've been moving at full speed to get ready to put forward a bold and ambitious plan for young children and families in Washington! We've spent a lot of time meeting with groups representing leaders in advocacy, professional development, P-3, and the Early Learning Action Alliance as well as our partners in the Early Learning Partnership, Thrive by Five Washington and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. These meetings have been a great reminder of the incredible leadership our state has working on behalf of young children, and we are grateful for everyone's generous contribution of time and intellect to help us get organized!



I also have recently asked a number of key early learning partners to serve on an Advisory Team for the RTT - ELC grant application ([click here to see our July Community Outreach Report](#)). We convened this group last Friday and received great feedback and input that we'll be incorporating into our application. Once the final RTT-ELC guidelines are release in late August, we'll be convening this group again to share details about the proposal we're developing and to seek their feedback.

Our goal is to build upon the work that we have done in Washington, and to use this federal grant opportunity to get us to our goals faster. This has required us to "map" the Early Learning Plan with the RTT-ELC preliminary guidelines.

We have developed a draft visual that shows how our [11 initial Early Learning Plan priorities](#) can complement the priorities that have been described in the RTT-ELC preliminary guidelines. We know Race to the Top is not about implementing a laundry list of services, but rather promoting a cohesive, integrated, and organized system for improving quality and creating lasting outcomes for children.

We are working now to understand how our initial Early Learning Plan priorities fit in a structure focused on leadership and governance, aligned systems, integrated services, and a strong accountability system.

Leadership and Governance: Washington has much to be proud of in the leadership that's supporting our work in early learning. In addition to a Cabinet-level Department of Early Learning and Thrive by Five Washington, a public-private partnership to support early learning (remember most states don't have

Integrating Our 2011 Priorities into a "System"



either of these!), Washington state has a fully adopted early learning plan with clearly outlined priorities. In addition, we have a strong connection with K-12 through the Early Learning Partnership joint resolution signed by DEL, Thrive, and OSPI. Lastly, we have an active Early Learning Advisory Council and strong community coalitions throughout the state.

System Alignment: there is much work underway to create an aligned system, and much work to be done. A Professional Development Consortium has recently released recommendations and is now working to prioritize those recommendations. Washington was the recipient of a federal P-20 Data Systems grant and we are building our plans for that work.

Integrated Services: While Washington provides many services to its residents, the ones that were highlighted in the Early Learning Plan's initial priorities include parenting learning opportunities, preschool to third grade alignment, QRIS, and infant/toddler services. We have a lot of work happening in all of these areas, and our challenge will be to integrate and align them to ensure that each is garnering the greatest outcomes possible for young children.

Accountability: Having a strong accountability system has been my top priority as DEL director. It's imperative that we know whether the programs we implement are getting results. To this end, we have developed the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) and are reviewing and revising our state's early learning guidelines, a research-based guide for parents, caregivers, and professionals to understand and support child growth and development.

While only the 11 initial priorities of the *Early Learning Plan* are illustrated on the framework shown above, we believe that it's possible for us to align ALL of our work with young children over time and ensure that we're getting the best outcomes for children possible. We also think that it is a potential framework to use in our Race to the Top application to demonstrate how the pieces of our work in Washington can form an efficient and effective system for kids.

But we need your feedback. Please let us know what you think, and any suggestions that you have at RTT-ELC@del.wa.gov and continue to check our [webpage](#) for new information. And thank you for your commitment to young children and to accomplishing our top goals:



Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Hyde, Ph.D
Director